

## ***William Woodruff***

William Edward Woodruff was born on December 24, 1795 in Fire Place, Long Island, New York. At the age of 15, Woodruff began a six-year apprenticeship with a printer, who fed and housed him while training him in the newspaper business.

In 1818, Woodruff traveled west, settling in Nashville, Tennessee, where he worked for Thomas G. Bradford at the *Clarion* and *Tennessee State Gazette*. When the U.S. Congress created the Territory of Arkansas in 1819, Woodruff quickly purchased a used wooden printing press and traveled by keelboat and canoe to the territorial capitol at Arkansas Post, wanting to establish the first newspaper. He succeeded, and the first issue of the *Arkansas Gazette* was printed on November 20, 1819. In 1820, Woodruff was appointed the official printer for the Arkansas Territory. When the territorial capitol relocated to a more central location in 1821, Woodruff followed the government to Little Rock. By 1824, Woodruff had started a private business called the Arkansas Military Land Agency, where he managed land owned by people who lived outside the territory. He bought and sold property across the territory and soon accumulated thousands of acres, which accounted for most of his wealth.

On November 14, 1827, Woodruff married Jane Eliza Mills and they had eight children who lived to adulthood. As the editor of the *Gazette*, Woodruff took stands against the popular vices of drinking and dueling. He remained politically neutral in the early days, but eventually supported only the Democratic party, angering many political opponents by his involvement in heavy political debates. When Arkansas became a state in 1836, Woodruff became the first state treasurer.

After retiring from the newspaper in 1853, Woodruff stayed in Little Rock with his family through the beginning of the Civil War. However, during the federal occupation of the city, he was forced to leave because he wrote a pro-Confederate letter to one of his friends. So, he and one of his daughters traveled to Washington, Arkansas and Louisville, Kentucky, while Woodruff's wife and remaining children

shared their house with federal officers and an army hospital during the occupation. At the end of the war, Woodruff returned to Little Rock, where he remained out of the public eye. Woodruff died on June 19, 1885, at the age of 89 and was buried in Mount Holly Cemetery.